Bus service between Agartala and Dhaka

548. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to introduce bus service between Agartala and Dhaka;

(b) if so, the decision taken thereon; and

(c) by when the bus service is going to be introduced between the above two places?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Governments of India and Bangladesh have signed an Agreement and a Protocol to operate a passenger bus service between Agartala and Dhaka on July 10, 2001 in Dhaka.

(c) The bus service is likely to begin in the last week of August, 2001.

Indian fishermen in Pakistani jails

549. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of Indian fishermen arc languishing in jails of Pakistan;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have taken any efforts to get them released;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether Government have taken up the issue with the Head of Pakistan who paid visit to India recently; and

(0 if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE INTHE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) As per available information there are 196 Indian fishermen currently in Pakistani custody.

(c) and (d) As a result of Government's persistent efforts, Pakistan has agreed on 26.6.2001 to release 196 fishermen along with their 32 boats.